

**Testimony in Support of  
HB 5054, AA Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence Judiciary Committee  
February 26, 2016  
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Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the committee. I am here to support the CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) as the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence. Their members provide essential services to nearly 50,000 victims of domestic violence each year.

I urge your support of HB 5054, which will provide additional protections to victims of domestic violence at potentially their most vulnerable time while strengthening the processes within a system designed to help them by temporarily removing firearms from their abuser when the abuser has received notice that he or she is the subject of a temporary, ex parte restraining order. The bill also addresses several recommendations of the Task Force to Study Service of Restraining Orders established pursuant Public Act 14-217.

The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is when she or he takes steps to end the relationship. Because domestic violence is all about power and control of one partner over the other, this can be a particularly difficult time for the abuser, who will begin to realize that he or she is losing control over the victim. This may result in the offender taking more extreme actions to regain control.

Evidence-based research has shown that domestic assaults that involve firearms are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force. Women in an abusive relationship are 5 times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm. Meanwhile, state laws prohibiting firearm possession by persons subject to restraining orders reduced rates of intimate partner homicide of women by 12-13%, decreasing overall intimate partner homicides by 10%. Finally, at least 20 other states have recognized that dangerous combination posed by domestic violence and firearms and have given their courts explicit authority to temporarily remove firearms from some or all individuals subject to ex parte restraining orders.

With the intent to protect victims of domestic violence at a vulnerable time, this General Assembly has established a process by which a judge may, for a two week period prior to a hearing, deny someone access to their home and children if they believe, based on a sworn statement to the court, that the individual poses "immediate and present physical danger" to the victim. We are asking, given the overwhelming research that demonstrates how unsafe victims of domestic violence are when firearms are accessible, that respondents also be denied access to firearms during this temporary period.

I very much appreciate that there is a condition in the bill which would require an expedited hearing under certain circumstances, for those who may be the subject of such an order and who are required to carry a firearm as a part of their employment. This measure would provide some modicum of protection from the potential of malicious "prosecution" prior to due process being carried out.

While "Risk Warrants" are a valuable tool, and wish this were not the case; I do understand that not all victims feel comfortable immediately filing a report with the police. This is just one more tool to remove firearms (albeit temporarily) from a potentially volatile situation.

Having been a police officer for twenty-seven years, having responded to countless domestic violence calls for service and having seen the benefits of the current practice of removing firearms from a home which is prone to violence via a "risk warrant" or as a result of a court order of protection; this legislation would provide one more step in our collective safety plans as we all seek to break the cycle of violence while providing much needed help to all involved.